Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 RABAT 02536 01 OF 02 291035Z

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05

SSO-00 INRE-00 L-01 CIAE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 IO-03 PRS-01

/045 W
---------- 104526
O R 290940Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5513
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 2536

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO SS SP
SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND THE U.S. INTEREST: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

REF: (A) MADRID 3575, (B) RABAT 2509, (C) RABAT 2527, (D) RABAT 2533

1. SUMMARY. CHANGE OF SPANISH POLICY ON SAHARA, AS SEEN FROM HERE, INCREASES CHANCES OF SERIOUS CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA WHILE REDUCING PROSPECT OF SPAIN'S GETTING INTO DRAWN-OUT "COLONIAL WAR" WITH MOROCCO. THOUGH LEVEL OF TENSION HAS RISEN, IT HAS BECOME A NEW BALL GAME IN TERMS U.S. INTERESTS, INVOLVING LESS POTENTIAL RISK TO U.S. STRATEGIC POSTURE IN REGION. SPANISH ROLE REMAINS CRITICAL FACTOR FOR NEAR TERM. PRESIDENT'S FORTHCOMING MADRID VISIT GIVES US OPPORTUNITY PROBE SPAIN'S IMMEDIATE INTENTIONS AND PERHAPS OFFER SPANISH SOME GENERAL COUNSEL DESIGNED TO
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PAGE 02 RABAT 02536 01 OF 02 291035Z

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

ADVANCE OUR CONTINUING INTEREST IN REGIONAL STABILITY.
END SUMMARY.

2. NEW SITUATION CHANGES NATURE OF U.S. INTEREST: AS LONG AS SPAIN KEPT THE DOOR SHUT ON BILATERAL TALKS WITH MOROCCO, PRESSURES ON KING HASSAN TO SHOW HIS PEOPLE CONCRETE PROGRESS ON SAHARA KEPT MOUNTING AND CHANCES OF OUTRIGHT CONFLICT BETWEEN SPAIN AND MOROCCO KEPT INCREASING. IF SUCH CONFLICT HAD OCCURRED, U.S. WOULD HAVE BEEN PRESENTED WITH AGONIZING CHOICES SOMEWHAT COMPARABLE TO THOSE WE HAVE FACED IN GREECE AND TURKEY OVER CYPRUS CRISIS. BOTH SPAIN AND MOROCCO, THAT IS, OCCUPY POSITIONS OF CONSIDERABLE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO US, EACH HAS CLOSE RELATIONS INCLUDING ARMS SUPPLY WITH U.S., AND EACH COULD BE EXPECTED TO DEMAND DEGREE OF SUPPORT FROM US AGAINST THE OTHER THAT WE COULD NOT POSSIBLY MEET.

3. SPAIN HAS NOW CHANGED ITS POLICY OF IMMOBILISM AND MOROCCANS FIND THEMSELVES PRESSING HARD ON DOOR THAT MAY BE OPENING TOO FAST. INEVITABLY, FOM'S FIRST REACTION TO GOS'S STATEMENT (REF A) WAS STUNNED SURPRISE AND CONFUSION. IT DID NOT TAKE MOROCCANS LONG, HOWEVER, TO SENSE THAT NEW SPANISH STANCE NOT NECESSARILY ONE FAVORING THEIR OWN OBJECTIVES, SINCE USE OF TERM "INTERESTED STATES" IN GOS ANNOUNCEMENT INDICATES CONTINUED SPANISH INSISTENCE ON ALGERIA'S PARTICIPATION IN ANY FORTHCOMING NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH IS UNACCEPTABLE TO GOM.

4. WHILE PUBLIC GOM STATEMENTS STILL FULMINATE AGAINST SPAIN, HIGH-RANKING OFFICIALS AND POLITICIANS INDICATE IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS THAT SPAIN IS INCREASINGLY DISCOUNTED. TRUE ADVERSARY OF MOROCCAN ASPIRATIONS IS INCREASINGLY IDENTIFIED AS ALGERIA,HWHICH IS VIEWED WITH ANGER AND ALARM. PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERCURRENT CONTAINS DISTURBINGLY BELLIGERENT ELEMENT BASED ON UNDERLYING PERCEPTION COMMONLY SHARED BY MOROCCANS THAT IN LONG RUN ALGERIA AND NOT SPAIN IS MOROCCO'S NATURAL RIVAL. ALL THIS SUGGESTS THAT WHILE MOROCCANS WERE DISINCLINED TO UNDERGO TEST OF ARMS WITH SPANISH TROOPS (EXCEPT FOR GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES), SIGNIFICANTLY LESS OF THIS SENSE CONFIDENTIAL

OF RESTRAINT WILL BE IN EVIDENCE SHOULD ACHIEVEMENT OF MOROCCO'S OBJECTIVES VIS-A-VIS SAHARA BE SEEN BY MOROCCANS TO REQUIRE TEST OF ARMS WITH ALGERIA.

5. FROM MILITARY POINT OF VIEW, MOROCCANS ARE IN ADVANTAGEOUS POSITION TO MOVE QUICKLY ON NEARBY EL-AYOUN (SOME 60 MILES) AND BOU CRAA (C. 120 MILES) ONCE SPANISH OFFERED NO RESISTANCE. ALGERIANS WOULD HAVE TO COVER

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

MUCH GREATER DISTANCES OVER MORE RUGGED TERRAIN IN ORDER TO ATTAIN SAME GOALS. ALSO, MOROCCANS UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS ENJOY NUMERICAL MILITARY SUPERIORITY OVER ALGERIAN FORCES PRESENT IN IMMEDIATE REGION AND HAVE RECENTLY BOLSTERED THEIR ANTI-AIRCRAFT CAPABILITY, WHICH SHOULD DIMINISH GENERAL ALGERIAN AIR SUPERIORITY. IN SUM, MOROCCANS WOULD PROBABLY JUDGE THEY COULD, IF ALL ELSE FAILS, EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO PULL OFF A QUICK MILITARY OCCUPATION OF AT LEAST NORTHERN PART OF SAHARA CONTAINING CAPITAL AND PHOSPHATE DEPOSITS, WITH ALGERIANS AT A DIS-ADVANTAGE IN ANY ATTEMPT TO INTERDICT SUCH AN OPERATION. (WORTH NOTING ALSO THAT NONE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT PRESENTLY BEING SUPPLIED TO GOM UNDER OUR CURRENT FMS PROGRAM WOULD BE INVOLVED.)

6. THIS CONSTELLATION OF FACTORS SUGGESTS THAT IF SPAIN PULLS OUT OF SAHARA RAPIDLY, IN ADVANCE OF AGREED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, AND IF ALGERIANS GIVE WRONG SIGNALS, MOROCCAN TROOPS WILL MOVE IN VERY FAST. THERE APPEARS TO BE TOTAL NATIONAL UNITY ACROSS POLITICAL SPECTRUM ON THIS. SEEN IN THIS LIGHT, TALK OF SAHARAN "INDEPENDENCE" APPEARS UNREALISTIC.

7. ARMED CONFLICT BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA IN NORTHERN SAHARA WOULD OF COURSE ENDANGER REGIONAL STABILITY, ENTAIL SERIOUS RISKS FOR CONTINUATION OF MOROCCAN REGIME, AND OTHERWISE IMPINGE ON SIGNIFICANT U.S. INTERESTS. IT WOULD NOT, HOWEVER, CONFRONT US WITH THE KINDS OF DILEMMAS WE WOULD FACE IN A CONFLICT BETWEEN SPAIN AND MOROCCO-- SINCE NEITHER SIDE, IN STRICTLY INTER-ARAB FIGHT, WOULD BE INCLINED LOOK TO U.S. TO PLAY MAJOR MEDIATORY ROLE; HENCE RELATIVELY LOW U.S. PROFILE COULD BE SUSTAINED WITH LITTLE LOSS TO U.S. INTERESTS. NEVERTHELESS, OUTLOOK CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 RABAT 02536 01 OF 02 291035Z

APPEARS SUFFICIENTLY SERIOUS IN TERMS U.S. INTERESTS TO PROMPT US TO SUGGEST URGENT FURTHER REVIEW OF PRESENT U.S. STANCE, PARTICULARLY IN CONTEXT UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO MADRID.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECRETARY'S PARTY.

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Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

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ACTION AF-04

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---------- 104694
O R 290940Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5514
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RABAT 2536

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8. THE ALGERIAN FACTOR: WHILE I NATURALLY DEFER TO THE DEPARTMENT AND TO EMBASSY ALGIERS TO ASSESS REASONS FOR RECENT ALGERIAN MOVES AND U.S. INTERESTS TOWARD ALGERIA, MY PERCEPTION FROM ADMITTEDLY SOMEWHAT LIMITED VANTAGE POINT OF RABAT IS AS FOLLOWS: ALGERIAN STRATEGY TOWARD MOROCCO, LIKE ALGERIAN STRATEGY ON A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL ISSUES MORE DIRECTLY INVOLVING U.S. INTERESTS, APPEARS BASED ON NEO-GAULLIST TACTIC OF BLOCKING ALL PROGRESS EVERYWHERE WITH VIEW OF FORCING OTHERS TO COME AROUND IN INTEREST OF "UNITY." THIS APPROACH IS NORMALLY IMPLE-MENTED BEHIND THE SCENES, IN SUBTERRANEAN MOVES WHICH CONCEAL ALGERIAN HAND. IN THIS INSTANCE THIS APPROACH HAS CREATED IN MOROCCO A PROFOUND SENSE OF FRUSTRATION (WHICH SOME OF MY COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE BEEN DEALING WITH ALGERIA IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS MAY UNDERSTAND).

9. IS IT IN OUR INTEREST TO TRY TO INFLUENCE EVOLUTION OF THIS SITUATION SO AS TO HEAD OFF POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENT OUTCOME? NOT, I SHOULD JUDGE, IF IT INVOLVES
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ANY MAJOR AND VISIBLE U.S. ROLE IN WHAT IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING AN INTER-ARAB SQUABBLE. BUT AS LONG AS SPAIN STILL IS IN PHYSICAL CONTROL OF THE TERRITORY, WE MAY FIND IT USEFUL TO PLAY A MODEST BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE,

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

PRIMARILY IN MADRID, DESIGNED TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF EVENTS AWAY FROM AN EVENTUAL MILITARY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA. IN PARTICULAR, I BELIEVE PRESIDENT'S AND SECRETARY'S VISIT TO MADRID PROVIDE EARLY OPPORTUNITY FOR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION.

10. HOW RAPID WILL THE SPANISH WITHDRAWAL BE? MAXIMUM DANGER OF MILITARY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA WOULD APPEAR LIKELY IF SPANISH FORCES CHOOSE TO EVACUATE SAHARA AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE, CREATING POWER VACUUM THERE IN, SAY, A MATTER OF WEEKS. GIVEN THE PRESENT CONSTELLATION OF ATTITUDES AND FORCES, THIS WOULD VIRTUALLY FORCE GOM TO MOVE ITS TROOPS IN TO EL-AYOUN AND BOU CRAA ON THE HEELS OF THE DEPARTING SPANIARDS, DEFYING ALGERIA TO TAKE COUNTERMEASURES. IF, HOWEVER, SPANISH WITHDRAWAL WILL BE PHASED OVER A MATTER OF SIX MONTHS OR SO, AS SPANISH AMBASSADOR HERE HAS ESTIMATED (REF D), NORMAL INTER-ARAB PROPENSITY TO TALK OUT DIFFERENCES THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES AND EVENTUALLY DRIVE COMPLICATED BARGAINS SHOULD HAVE TIME TO TAKE EFFECT. PROCESSES ALREADY IN TRAIN IN UN AND ICJ WOULD ALSO HAVE BETTER CHANCE OF CONTRIBUTING TO PEACEFUL RESOLUTON.

11. WHY DOES SPAIN INSIST ON ALGERIAN PARTICIPATION? GOM KEENLY FEELS DISTINCTION BETWEEN STATUS OF MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA AS ACTIVE CLAIMANTS OF SAHARAN TERRITORY AND THAT OF ALGERIA, WHICH CLAIMS NO TERRITORY, BUT ONLY A VAGUELY DEFINED STATUS AS "INTERESTED PARTY." MUCH OF GOM'S SENSE OF ENCIRCLEMENT BY ALGERIA AND INCREASING DESPERATION STEMS FROM FRUSTRATION AT SPAIN'S UNWILLINGNESS ACKNOWLEDGE THIS DISTINCTION BY RECOGNIZING POSSIBILITY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH TERRITORIAL CLAIMANTS ALONE, I.E., MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA BUT NOT ALGERIA. I CONFESS TO A CERTAIN UNCERTAINITY IN MY OWN MIND AS TO HOW THIS SPANISH INSISTENCE ON INCLUDING ALGERIA IN ANY FUTURE TALKS SERVES EITHER SPAIN'S OR MORE GENERAL WESTERN INTERESTS. IN THIS CONNECTION I COMMEND UNUSUALLY FRANK
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PAGE 03 RABAT 02536 02 OF 02 291047Z

REMARKS SPANISH AMBASSADOR HAS JUST MADE TO ME ON SUBJECT (REF D).

12. SUGGESTION REGARDING PRESIDENT'S MADRID VISIT: WHAT FOREGOING SUGGESTS TO ME IS THAT IT WOULD SERVE U.S. INTERESTS FOR PRESIDENT TO RAISE SPANISH SAHARA ISSUE AT HIGHEST LEVEL OF GOS WHEN HE VISITS MADRID NEXT WEEK (IF INDEED SPANIARDS DO NOT RAISE ISSUE WITH HIM FIRST). HE CAN DO SO IN RELATIVELY LOW KEY FASHION, STRESSING U.S. DISINTEREST IN BECOMING DIRECTLY INVOLVED, AND PERHAPS COUCHING HIS OBSERVATIONS IN TERMS OF QUESTIONS RATHER

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006

THAN RECOMMENDATIONS. THE FOLLOWING POSSIBLE QUESTIONS OCCUR TO ME: HOW RAPIDLY DOES GOS INTEND TO WITHDRAW FROM SPANISH SAHARA? TO WHAT EXTENT IS COMPLETION OF THIS WITHDRAWAL CONTINGENT ON CERTAIN OTHER EVENTS OCCURRING, E.G., COMPLETION OF ICJ REVIEW? WHICH OF VARIOUS POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES TO SPANISH WITHDRAWAL DOES SPAIN SEE AS SERVING ITS AND WESTERN INTERESTS THE BEST? WHY? (DOES GOS, FOR EXAMPLE, REGARD MOROCCAN REGIME AS SO UNSTABLE THAT IT FEELS IT MUST HEDGE AGAINST EVENTUALITY OF MOROCCO TAKEOVER BY INSISTING ON HAVING ALGERIA IN ON ANY DEAL?)

13. RECOGNIZE HOUR OF PRESIDENT'S MADRID VISIT IS DRAWING VERY NEAR BUT ASSUME PRESIDENT'S BRIEF ON THIS SUBJECT IS BEING REVIEWED IN ANY CASE, IN LIGHT OF IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN LAST FEW DAYS.
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